ART AND POLITICS IN EURIPIDES' ION: THE GIGANTOMACHY AS SPECTACLE AND MODEL OF ACTION[1*]

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Resumen

En este artículo discuto la significación de los actos humanos violentos, que la actitud secreta y la falta de confiabilidad oracular de Apolo provocan en el Ión, vinculando estos actos con el clima político de Atenas a medida que la guerra del Peloponeso se acercó. Argumento que Eurípides concentra su atención en la inclinación Ateniense por la violencia a través de tres artefactos (los tres relacionados con la *Gigantomaquia* y todos traídos desde el hogar como objetos o imágenes mentales) que ofrecen a Creusa y su entorno el modelo y modos de acción. Sobre la base de un número de pasajes de Tucídides que describen la triste realidad de la violencia ciega causada por la mera suposición, yo sugiero que Eurípides explora el mismo tema, pero le otorga un giro optimista, al mostrar que el peligro es advertido gracias al cuidado de Apolo y la colaboración de Atenea. A través de la comparación del Ión de Eurípides con las Euménides, argumento que Eurípides reformula el problema de la autoridad Apolínea que Esquilo trató magistralmente. El templo de los Alcmeónidas de Apolo es central para este diálogo: Esquilo capitaliza sobre su brillante fachada para promover los antiguos lazos Atenienses con Delfos, mientras que Eu-

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rípides explora el potencial dramático de la ceguera para lo que es visible a los ojos, recordando, de esa manera, a los Atenienses que el favor de Apolo es una cuestión de perspectiva. Esta pieza ofrece una inteligente respuesta para los reclamos de las simpatías pro-Espartanas del oráculo Délfico al negar la confiabilidad oracular del dios y por la afirmación de su favoritismo para con los Atenienses, su *focus* sobre el templo de Apolo, que constituye una prueba incontrovertible de los lazos entre Atenas y Delfos, sirve como un recordatorio de estos lazos que, descuidados como pueden hallarse en tiempos de crisis, se mantienen prominentes y tangibles.

Abstract

In this paper I discuss the significance of violent human acts which Apollo's secrecy and oracular unreliability provokes in the Ion, relating these acts to the political climate in Athens as the Peloponnesian war drew on. I argue that Euripides draws attention to the Athenian penchant for violence through three artifacts (all three related to the Gigantomachy and all brought from home as objects or mental images) which offer Creusa and her entourage the model and means of action. On the basis of a number of Thucydidean passages which depict the grim reality of blind violence caused by mere suspicion I suggest that Euripides explores the same issue but gives it an optimistic twist by showing that the danger is averted thanks to Apollo's care and Athena's help. Through comparison of the Ion with the Eumenides I argue that Euripides reformulates the problem of Apolline authority which Aeschylus had magisterially treated. The Alcmaeonid temple of Apollo is central to this dialogue: Aeschylus capitalizes on its brilliant façade in order to promote the old Athenian ties with Delphi, whereas Euripides explores the dramatic potential of blindness to what is visible to the eye thus reminding the Athenians that Apolline favor is a matter of perspective. This play offers a clever response to claims of the pro-Spartan sympathies of the Delphic oracle by denying the god's oracular reliability and by affirming his favor to the Athenians; its focus on the temple of Apollo, which constitutes incontrovertible proof of the ties between Athens and Delphi, serves as a reminder of these ties which, overlooked as they may be at times of crisis, remain prominent and tangible.

Euripides' Ion is a play about misguided actions and strong emotions that lead to intense conflict, which is happily resolved in the end. To a great extent Apollo is responsible for the misguided actions of mortals, because for the most part he favours secrecy and tells either outright lies or half-truths. Yet there is no doubt that Apollo is a caring father: he saved Ion when Creusa exposed him after his birth, he has been instrumental in his integration and well-being in Delphi all along, and his latest plan is to establish him in Athens as heir to the Erechtheid line.[1] Apollo's plans and motives are therefore honourable, but the means whereby he tries to achieve them are clearly not. As Karelisa Hartigan observes "the characters are troubled and frustrated by a divinity who both fails to reveal his intent and deliberately lies to achieve it, while they are further distressed when his pronouncements do not match their expectations."[2] Apollo's plan finally works out, but mainly thanks to the authority of Athena, who appears ex machina to confirm Apollo's paternity and to sanction the return of the future progenitor of the Ionians to Athens as lawful heir to the Athenian autochthonous throne. Clearly, Apollo does not show lack of interest in his offspring in this play, but lack of authority which results from his secretive behaviour and the unreliability of his oracular responses.

In this paper I discuss the significance of the misguised and violent human initiatives that come about as a result of Apollo´s secrecy and oracular unreliability, relating them to the political climate in Athens as the Peloponnesian war drew on. In section I I focus on the pen nchant for violence of the Athenian contingent within the dramatic reality. I argue that three artifacts, all three related to the Gigantomachy and all brought from home as objects or mental images, offer Creusa and her entourage the model of action and the means to counter Apollo's plans. In sections II and IV I argue in favour of Euripides' manifold and sustained dialogue with Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. In II I suggest that in posing the problem of Apolline authority Euripides reformulates a question that Aeschylus

[1] For a forceful defense of Apollo's role in this play see in particular Wassermann (1940), Burnett (1962) and Burnett (1971 : 109-29).
[2] Hartigan (1991: 69).

had magisterially treated in the *Eumenides* some four decades earlier. The analysis centers on the relentless challenge of Apolline authority on stage which in the *Eumenides* takes the form of fierce but open debate from start to finish and leads to reconciliation thanks to the negotiating skills of Athena: in the Ion anger, suspicion and violence replace debate for the most part and resolution comes once again thanks to Athena, but only after divine secrecy and human violent reaction to it have reached a dangerous impasse. In section III I adduce a number of passages from Thucydides which show the other side of the coin, namely the grim reality of impetuous violence caused by mere suspicion in a world where gods do not intervene *ex machina*. In section IV I explore further points of contact between the *Eumenides* and the *Ion*, this time focussing on the Delphic setting that the two plays share. I argue that both Aeschylus and Euripides integrate the temple of Apollo in the dramatic plot, but whereas Aeschylus capitalizes on the brilliant façade in order to promote Athenian eminence in Delphi, Euripides explores the dramatic potential of blindness to what is visible to the eye, thus drawing attention to the distortion of reality that conflict can cause. In section V I bring the strands of my argument together and I suggest that the Ion offers a response to stories claiming pro-Spartan sympathies on the part of the Delphic oracle: Euripides cleverly divorces Apollo's oracular reliability from the god's favour to the Athenians by denying the former and by affirming the latter; his focus on the temple of Apollo, which constitutes incontrovertible proof of the ties between Athens and Delphi, is interpreted as a reminder of these ties which, overlooked as they may be at times of crisis, remain prominent and tangible. Thus the Ion is not simply a dramatic version that foregrounds the old ties of Pythian Apollo with Athens, but a play that correlates this relationship with visible reality.

I. THE GIGANTOMACHY: ARTIFACTS

i. The pedimental sculptures

The vividness and elaboration of the description of the temple of Apollo's sculptures by the Chorus of Creusa's attendants has often been

seen as the ancient equivalent to modern guided tours.[3] Yet, as the finds of the French excavations have shown, the Chorus' account is not realistic.[4] The Gigantomachy, which the Chorus members urge one another to contemplate in the Parodos (ll. 205-218), was the sculptural decoration of the West pediment of the archaic temple of Apollo, which they could not see from the East side of the temple where they clearly locate themselves (ll. 219-21). Various interpretations have been offered to account for the discrepancy. Some scholars have attributed the reversal to Euripides' poor memory, whereas for others the reversal was intentional and served plot or other considerations.[5] I will argue in favour of intentional reversal and I begin by quoting Froma Zeitlin's succinct formulation which, in outline, informs my reading:

> In substituting the poetic image for the one that was sculpted on the temple's eastern façade, and by reversing iconographical direction from east to west, so as to give us Athena, Euripides hints at the absent presence of Apollo and looks ahead to the surprising substitution at the end, when in answer to Ion's demand to enter the shrine and confront

[3] See e.g. Hose (1990: 135 with n. 14), Hartigan (1991: 71 with n. 9) and more recently Zacharia (2003: 16).

[4] For the sculptural depictions of the East and West Pediments see La Coste-Messelière (1931) 16-32 (West Pediment) and 33-62 (East pediment).

[5] See e.g. Owen (1939: 83): "Eur. may be thinking of the Gigantomachia, and have forgottenthat it was on the west pediment and not on the east" and the reaction to this view by Müller (1975: 28): "Dies ist mir ganz unglaubhaft. Mancher Choreut hätte ihn bei der Einstudierung des Stückes korrigierenden können, wenn er die realistische Richtigkeit für wichtig gehalten haben sollte". Others feel that Euripides may have solved the discrepancy through a staging device: "The main skene building could have been adorned with both west and east pediments, in a non-dimensional representation common in vase-paintings" Hartigan (1991: 72, n. 10); See also Hose (1990: 137-39). I section V I explore this suggestion a little further. Immerwahr (1972 :285) points out that the chorus was familiar with the three Gigantomachic episodes that they describe from Athenian monuments. This is an important reminder that I explore further in section IV. Scholars who argue in favor of intentional transposition with a view to plot considerations include Müller (1975: 29-32); Rosivach (1977); Zeitlin (1994): see the quotation following in the text and the next footnote; Lee (1997: 177-85) who provides a useful summary of the various solutions that have been proposed; Zacharia (2003: 14-20); Fantuzzi forthcoming

> the god who fathered him, Athena indeed takes the place of Apollo. [...] Athena's first appearance in the iconographic programme of the temple might indeed be a harbinger of her later 'real' appearance on stage, a phenomenon that suggests an intriguing relationship between the different but related modalities of pictorial and theatrical representations in the economy of the play.[6]

In this section I argue that the transposition of the West pediment to the façade of the temple is much more intricately woven into the fabric of dramatic action, whereas in section IV I discuss the ironic effect of the transference and its political message.

The Gigantomachy features prominently in the Parodos and in two more scenes that are crucial for the direction that human action takes, thus thwarting Apollo's original plan, namely the uneventful departure of Ion with the royal couple from Delphi and the revelation of his true identity to Creusa in Athens. According to modern reconstructions the pedimental representations of the Gigantomachy must have featured a number of opponents and duels (plates n. 1 & 1a).[7] Of these duels the Chorus choose to focus on three: Athena brandishing her gorgon-faced shield at Enceladus (209-11), Zeus burning Mimas to ashes with his thunderbolt (212-15), and Bromius slaying another of Earth's children with his ivy staff (ll. 216-18). It is of course no surprise that Athena first catches the eye of the Chorus (λεύσσω Παλλάδ᾽ ἐμὰν θεόν, 211). The priority of Athena is consistent with the Chorus' predilection for familiar Athenian places, sights, rites and tales. From the point of view of the Gigantomachy as source of inspiration for subsequent action, it is worth noting that the reference to Athena's shield as γοργωπὸν ἴτυν (210) is an early allusion to the story that Creusa will reveal to the Pedagogue. The choice of Zeus for mention is no surprise either, since, being the leader of the Olympians, he had a central role in figurative representations, as

[6] Zeitlin (1994: 151). For a similar view see Müller (1975: 29-32).

[7] Plate 1: Reconstruction La Coste-Messelière (1931) - modified, drawing taken from Lapalus (1947); Plate 1a: Delphi Museum, personal archive.

we shall see in section IV.[8] The third deity that is singled out, Dionysus, is also associated with the Athenian plot, as becomes evident later in the play.

ii. The golden bracelet

In the third episode, when the Pedagogue, taken in by the Chorus' report of the deceptive Apolline oracle to Xuthus, explains to Creusa her husband's plan to "deceive" her and urges her to defend herself and Erechtheid rule, the Athenian princess resorts to Athenian resources, i.e. Gorgon's poison. The story she tells the Pedagogue and the Chorus has an unmistakable Athenian ring: when the Giants engaged the gods in battle at Phlegra, Earth gave birth to a terrible monster, Gorgon, to fight alongside the Giants. Pallas Athena, however, killed hr and used the hide of Gorgon as her shield-what people calls aegis! In line 997 (as usually emended) Creusa gives a new etymology to aegis in order to strengthen her vision.[9] Moreover, Creusa says, Athena put two drops of Gorgon's blood, one causing death, the other warding off disease, in a bracelet and gave it to the new-born Erichthonius. Erichthonius passed it on to Erechtheus and him in turn to Creusa (ll. 985-1015). The role of Erichthonius in the story shows that this is an Athenian version of the more widespread story that attributed the killing of Gorgon to Perseus.[10] The killing of Gorgon by Athena is not known before Euripides: whether the story represents an old tradition or is Euripides' innovation has been a matter of dispute.[11]

The novelty of Creusa's story may have been a matter of dispute, but its Athenean provenance is evident: Athena and the earthborn Erich-

[8] For an inventory of visual representations of the *Gigantomachy* see Vian (1951).

[9] See Owen (1939: 135-36 ad 997); Lee (1997: 270 ad 997)

[10] Hesiod, *Theogony* 276-81: Σθεννώ τ' Εὐρυάλη τε Μέδουσά τε λυγρὰ παθοῦσα·| ἡ μὲν ἔην θνητή, αἰδ' ἀθάνατοι καὶ ἀγήρῳ, | αἱ δύο· τῇ δὲ μιῇ παρελέξατο Κυανοχαίτης |ἐν μαλακῷ λειμῶνι καὶἀνθεσιν εἰαρινοῖσι. | τῆς ὅτε δὴ Περσεὺς κεφαλὴν ἀπεδειροτόμησεν, | ἐξέθορε Χρυσάωρ τε μέγας καὶ Πήγασος ἵππος.

[11] For the various views on the antiquity (or not) of the Euripidean version see Mastronarde (1975:168) with the bibliography cited in n. 33.

thonius are key players in the acquisition and preservation within family ownership of the deadly weapon that will prove a catalyst of events. It is also important to note the visual manifestation of the hereditary weapon on stage. Its significance for eliciting reactions and visible results will be discussed later. For the moment it is worth pointing out the attention that the Athenian princess draws to the visibility of the bracelet that holds the magic liquids. When the Pedagogue asks Creusa, if her father gave her the bracelet before he died, Creusa points to her wrist:

ναί· κἀπὶ καρπῶι γ' αὔτ᾽ ἐγὼ χερὸς φέρω.
Yes, and it is on my wrist that I carry it.
(1009)[12]

Once Creusa agrees on the proper course of action, she repeats that it is golden and calls attention to its visibility once again:[13]

Οἶσθ᾽ οὖν ὃ δράσον· χειρὸς ἐξ ἐμῆς λαβὼν
Χρύσωμ᾽ Ἀθάνας τόδε, παλαιὸν ὄργανον

Well you have your instructions! Take from my hand
this golden ornament of Athena, a phial made long ago,
(1030-1031)

Once the golden bracelet is transferred and the pact is sealed, the Chorus, who were the first to point to the pedimental Gigantomachy and had singled out for mention the Gorgon decorating the shield of Athena, pray to Hecate for the success of the enterprise: "You who rule assaults made at night, steer also the contents of the fatal cups drunk by day towards those against whom my mistress, my mistress, sends them: from the gore dripping from the earth-born Gorgon's severed throat to the one making an attack on the house of the Erechtheidai" (1048-1057). In this passage and elsewhere (1232-34) it becomes clear that the mention of Dio-

[12] All Euripidean quotations are taken from Diggle's Oxford edition; the English translations of quoted passages are those of Lee with the exception of l. 1116, which is mine.

[13] Creusa had already mentioned that Athena had put the two drops of Gorgon's blood in a golden bracelet (χρυσέοισι δεσμοῖς, 1007) and given it to Erechtheus.

nysus in the description of the pedimental Gigantomachy prefigures his role in the Athenian plot, the mixing of the blood of Gorgon with wine.[14]

In the fourth episode the focus shifts from the golden object, which the Pedagogue has been instructed by Creusa to hide in his robes, to the visible results of its content. The Chorus' question to the Servant who brings the bad news is instructive: "how then did the secret designs become visible?" (**ὤφθη** δὲ πῶς τὰ κρυπτὰ μηχανήματα, 1116). The Servant describes in great and vivid detail how the Pedagogue poured the poison in Ion's cup, the blasphemous cry that was heard during the libation, the pouring down of the first drinks on Ion's command, the advent of the doves, the death of the dove that drank from the place on the ground where Ion's drink was poured, and the old man's confession under compulsion and after a body search (1182-1216). A line must be missing before l. 1215, but the verb **ὤφθη** (1215) stresses once again the visibility of the plot-outcome. The visibility of the effect of Gorgon's poison is also stressed by the Chorus, right before Creusa rushes on stage: φανερὰ φανερὰ τάδ᾽ ἤδη (1231).

iii. Creusa's unfinished handiwork

In the Exodos, a third artifact featuring the Gorgon and thereby alluding to the Gigantomachy will be given centre-stage, Creusa's own unfinished handicraft which she put in Ion's basket along with a golden snake-necklace and a garland of olive:

Κρ. Σκέψασθ᾽ ὃ παῖς ποτ᾽ οὖσ᾽ ὕφασμ᾽ ὕφην᾽ ἐγώ.
Ἴων ποῖόν τι; πολλὰ παρθένων ὑφάσματα.
Κρ. Οὐ τέλεον, οἷον δ᾽ ἐκδίδαγμα κερκίδος.
Ἴων μορφὴν ἔχον τίν᾽ ; ὡς με μὴ ταυτηι λάβηις .
Κρ. Γοργὼν μὲν ἐν μέσοισιν ἠτρίοις πέπλον

[14] For the problematic text in ll. 1232-34 see Lee (1997: 289 ad 1232-4). This is not, of course, the only function of Dionysus, for Xuthus thinks that he has fathered Ion with a maenad. For the many roles of Dionysus in this play see Müller (1975), who after a thorough examination of the Dionysiac imagery concludes that Ion enjoys the favour both of Apollo and Dionysus and Zeitlin (1996: 300-316), who brings out the rich nexus of Dionysiac images associating Ion with Dionysus.

Ἴων ὦ Ζεῦ, τίς ἡμὰς ἐκκυνηγετεῖ πότμος;
Κρ. Κεκρασπέδωται δ᾽ ὄφεσιν αἰγίδος τρόπον.
Ἴων ἰδού· τόδ᾽ ἔσθ᾽ ὕφασμα †θέσφαθ᾽ ὡς εὑρίσκομεν†.
Κρ. ὦ χρόνον ἱστῶν παρθένευμα τῶν ἐμῶν.
(1417-25)

Kr. Look for a piece of weaving which I did while just a child.
Ion What sort of weaving? Young girls do lots of weaving.
Kr. It is incomplete, like a sampler from the loom.
Ion What is its form? I ask so you don't take me in over this.
Kr. There is a Gorgon in the centre threads of the material.
Ion O Zeus, what destiny seeks me out like a hunter?
Kr. It is edged with snakes in the manner of the aigis.
Ion. Look! Here is the piece of weaving †how we discover oracles!†
Kr. Ah, girlish work of my loom seen after so long!

This piece of weaving is actually the first token that Creusa identifies and, a little later, recalling the events right before the exposure of Ion, she repeats the childlike quality of the woven fabric that she used to swathe the newborn baby (1489-90).[15] In the process of the identification the contents of the basket are visible to Ion, but not to Creusa, who must prove her claims. When her description of all visible objects proves accurate (the woven cloth, the golden snake-necklace, and the ever-green olive wreath) Ion is convinced that she, at least, is his mother.

Clearly Euripides opted for an unfinished artifact thus offering his audience the opportunity to reflect on the indelible impression of the Gigantomachy on the Athenian princess early in her life. The story which was then left unfinished was to take a new, real-life, turn much later, when Creusa decided to put the deadly drop of the monster's blood into effect. Moreover, the fact that upon looking at the pedimental sculptures her attendants instantly spot and zero in on the same theme on Athena's shield

[15] For the significance of Creusa's unfinished weaving in the action of the play see also the discussion in Zeitlin (1994: 155-56).

shows the continuing significance of the topic in the Erechtheid house. The preoccupation of the Athenian dramatic characters with the Gigantomachy and Gorgon is also evident in the two instances where Creusa invokes Athena as a witness of the Apolline paternity of Ion. In the first instance, she invokes the goddess to bear witness to the truthfulness of her statement using the epithet "Gorgon-slayer" (Γοργοφόνα, 1478). When Ion puts pressure on his mother asking whether her union with the god was a fact or a maiden's typical false claim, Creusa swears by Athena as follows:

> μὰ τὴν παρασπίζουσαν ἅρμασίν ποτε
> Νίκην Ἀθάναν Ζηνὶ γηγενεῖς ἔπι,
> Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδείς σοι πατὴρ θνητῶν, τέκνον,
> ἀλλ᾽ ὅσσπερ ἐξέθρεψε Λοξίας ἄναξ. (1528-1531)
>
> No, I swear by Athena Nike, who once carried her shield beside Zeus' chariot against the earth-born monsters, no mortal is your father, my son, but he who reared you, Lord Loxias.

Creusa's oath echoes the vivid initial choral reference to Athena's presence in the pedimental sculptures (209-11) in ring form.[16] The reference to the sculptural Gigantomachy in the Parodos and the allusion to it in the Exodos thus frame the two other Gigantomachy-related artifacts that have been equally visible and crucial in the chain of events that lead from the attempted murder to the reunion of mother and child.

It becomes clear in the end that the Athenian version of the Gigantomachy has provided the inspiration and the means for the Athenian reaction. The three artifacts are thus a sequence informing the Athenian alternative to the plan that the god of Delphi had originally conceived. The pedimental sculptures highlight Athena's prominence and prefigure her eventual appearance *ex machina*, as Zeitlin has suggested. Simultaneously, the initial attention which the Chorus paid to the representation of Gorgon on her shield sets the stage for Creusa's reinterpretation of its *aition* and the introduction of the second artifact which contains

[16] For this point see also Müller (1975: 32).

the power of killing and healing in the form of the two drops of Gorgon's blood respectively. The golden bracelet is thus a literal weapon for good or evil: it will be used as a weapon of destruction. Ironically, however, it constitutes the first step towards the eventual success of persuasion as the proper means to end the conflict. The third artifact represents a different configuration of peace and violence. It is the work of innocent and inexperienced young hands that represents a violent monster, conquered in turn by violence, whose blood can kill or heal. As has already been mentioned, Euripides opted for an unfinished artifact and therefore an open-ended narrative, for the childish handicraft is both an emblem of Creusa's future violent initiative and a token that leads to recognition and peace. As a recognition token, it carries the power of persuasion that will finally put an end to the destructive conflict and in this sense it is a figurative equivalent of the healing powers of Gorgon's blood.[17] In sum the pediment prefigures the ensuing violence, the golden phial substantiates it, and the unfinished handicraft cancels it out. All three artifacts are invested with the distinctive traits of the Athenian version of the Gigantomachy which enjoys visibility in the Delphic sanctuary from beginning to end.

Even more remarkable is the fact that all three artifacts ultimately come from home: The unfinished handiwork has been in Ion's basket - tucked away ever since he was brought to Delphi by Hermes. Creusa came wearing her bracelet.[18] As we have seen the multiple references to the Gigantomachy invest the Delphic pediment, invisible from the point of view of the Chorus and the other dramatic characters, with Athenian characteristics. In section IV I explore the ironic effect of the superimposition on the Delphic temple of the mental image of the façade of the Parthenon that the Chorus carry from Athens.

[17] It is not of course accidental that it is combined with an olive garland. For the symbolism of the olive see Segal (1999: 79-81).

[18] Burnett (1971:115) : "Creusa's poison is a thing she has always worn on her wrist; it is almost apart of herself; and it well represent her essential mixture of nobility and rebellion"

II. THE CHALLENGE OF APOLLINE WORD: VIOLENCE vs. PERSUASION IN THE ION AND THE EUMENIDES

The ultimate effect of the Apolline plan and the actual outcome caused by the Athenian reaction is the same, but their respective success rests on totally different premises. Notwithstanding the temporal and local difference (later in Athens/now in Delphi), the two different approaches share the same outcome: Xuthus remains blissfully ignorant and Creusa learns that Ion is her son. The difference of the two plans lies in the premises underlying their respective acceptance: the success of the Apolline plan rests on total faith in the divine word and in the mortal who conveys it. The Athenian contingent has faith neither in the divine word nor in Xuthus, and their reaction necessitates a new plan which also fails, but opens the way for a solution which relies on knowledge and persuasion.[19] The reaction of the non-Athenian Xuthus exemplifies the uncritical attitude towards oracles. Xuthus accepts Apollo's words unquestioningly. As becomes clear from his conversation with Ion, however, Apollo's oracle has left many key-issues unaccounted for: 'Am I your natural son? (537) Who's my mother? (540) Am I an illegitimate child? (545) Did you have an affair before your marriage with Erechtheus' daughter? (546) was I born in Athens? (547) how did I end up in Delphi? (548) Have you been to Delphi before? (550) did you stay with a proxenos? (551) How did I end up in Apollo's temple? (555) These are obviously important questions for somebody destined to rule a city. Xuthus admits that, overjoyed with the prospect of having a son, he did not ask the god for clarifications.

The questions that Apollo's oracle left unanswered and Xuthus did not think of asking are precisely those which are important to everybody else. The identity of the mother and the problems arising from a prospective ruler's unknown origin are questions that bother Ion (585-606), the Chorus (681-694, 1074-1089), and the Pedagogue who suspects that Xuthus wants

[19] For the happy outcome as a product of divine and human action and its advantages see Lloyd (1986).

to impose a slave woman's son as king of Athens and indicates what the proper course of action should have been, had Xuthus' motives been noble (808-31, 836-842). Ion's questions, and his estimate of Athenian politics and of Creusa's reactions, lead Xuthus to the decision to keep the oracle secret for a while and to take Ion to Athens as a spectator (θεατήν, 656). He declares that in due time he will induce Creusa to allow Ion to inherit his rule over Athens (659-60).

Xuthus' secrecy arouses suspicions about his motives, which set in motion the Athenian plan. Yet the Pedagogue, Creusa, and the Chorus are all too quick to jump into conclusions and take initiative. The Pedagogue acts out of ignorance. The Chorus who were a witness to Xuthus' conversation with Ion are too easily convinced by the Pedagogue's conspiratorial theory. Creusa, who came with the intention of asking Apollo about the fortunes of her exposed child, does not entertain even for a moment the idea that Ion may be this child. Thus, although they all challenge Apollo's pronouncement, none of them scrutinizes its meaning even after Creusa's revelations. The irony is heightened when the Pedagogue asks Creusa why she exposed her baby and she responds that she did it in the hope that the god might save his offspring (ὡς τὸν θεὸν σώσοντα τόν γ' αὐτοῦ γόνον, 965). Clearly then, if Xuthus' uncritical acceptance of the oracle occupies one end of the spectrum, the Athenians' uncritical rejection of it occupies the other thus leaving the middle position for Ion as the only dramatic person who tries to achieve some balance between emotion and critical thought.

It is now time to turn to the relation of the *Ion* to the *Eumenides*. On the Athenian stage, the challenge to Apollo's authority and the final triumph of the divine word is of course the rule.[20] The uniqueness of the Eumenides and the Ion, and therefore their crucial similarity, lies in the relentless challenge to Apollo and his ineffectiveness in carrying out his plan without the help of Athena, who in both cases saves his authority.[21]

[20]See Roberts (1984); Bushnell (1988:108-27): her final chapter is dedicated to Euripides and has the eloquent title "Euripides and the erasure of Prophecy".

[21] For Athena's help of Apollo in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* see the recent discussions by Vamvouri

The differences in tone and subject of the two plays notwithstanding, both foreground the limits of Apollo's power. In the Eumenides the god purifies Orestes, but is unable to free him from the pursuit of the formidable chthonic deities that flock at his temple in Delphi. Apollo sees the solution in Athens and commands Orestes to go there, escorted by Hermes, where Apollo will appear before the court to defend him (79-93).[22] In seeking help in Athens, Apollo makes use of a time-honoured precedent, for as the Pythia states in the opening of the play, on his way to Delphi from Delos Apollo stopped in Athens. The Athenians facilitated the installation of Apollo by escorting him to Delphi, opening roads on their way and taming the wild earth (9-16).

The Athens of the Oresteia is a self-confident and law-abiding city.[23] Confronted with the complexity of the situation, Athena recognizes the seriousness of the issue, declares that neither she nor a mortal alone can pronounce judgment, and announces the inauguration of the Areopagus. Apollo and Orestes win after a public and fierce debate, but the patron-goddess of Athens is not content with partisan politics and extends privileges to the defeated but still powerful chthonic deities in an effort to win them over for her city. Athena is successful after an elaborate negotiation (794-900) based on the power of persuasion:[24]

> Αθ. οὔτοι καμοῦμαι σοι λέγουσα τἀγαθά
> ὡς μήποτ᾽ εἴπῃς πρὸς νεωτέρας ἐμοῦ
> θεὸς παλαιὰ καὶ πολισσούχων βροτῶν
> ἄτιμος ἔρρειν τοῦδ᾽ ἀπόξενος πέδου.

Ruffy (2009: 532-37) and Kavoulaki (2009: 243) with the bibliographical references in n. 55.

[22] For Euripides' dialogue with Aeschylus in the *Electra*, the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and the *Orestes* see Roberts (1984) 95-120.

[23] For Athena as an overseer of eunomia in the *Eumenides* and the poetry of Solon see Athanasakki (2009:444-465)

[24] For the superiority of Athena's persuasive speech over Apollo's oracular discourse see now Johnston (2009).

ἀλλ᾽ εἰ μὲν ἀγνὸν ἐστί σοι Πειθοῦς σέβας,
γλώσσης ἐμῆς μείλιγμα καὶ θελκτήριον,
σὺ δ᾽ οὖν μένοις ἄν . [25] (881-87)

I will not weary of telling you all the good things I offer, so that you can never say that you, an ancient god, were driven dishonored and unfriended from the land by me in my youth, and by my mortal citizens. But if you hold that Persuasion has her sacred place of worship, in the sweet beguilement of my voice, then you might stay with us. …[26]

The points of contact between the Ion and the Eumenides are too many to be accidental.[27] Both dramas feature the temple of Apollo as the backdrop, the significance of which will be further explored in section IV. In both plays Apollo and Athena travel to and fro in order to find a way out of the impasse. The collaboration of the two gods, however, is not on equal terms, because in both cases the one in need is Apollo. In the Eumenides Apollo appears before the jury of Athenian citizens and wins a marginal victory thanks to Athena's authority. In the Ion Athena rushes to Delphi to excuse Apollo's behaviour and to give an authoritative account of the past, the present, and the future of Ion and Creusa. Finally, both plays foreground the ever-present danger of chthonic powers and indicate ways of handling their violent potential: the power of persuasion wins the day in both instances, but there are important differences to which I now turn.

[25] All Aeschylean quotations are taken from Page's Oxford edition; the translations of the quoted passages are those of Lattimore.

[26] Transl. R. Lattimore, slightly modified.

[27] Loraux (1990) 206 n. 125 sees an implicit relationship between the Ion and the Eumenides, which rests on the Delphic setting of both plays, the parallel role of the Erinyes and Gorgon, Hermes' role as intermediary, the promise of prosperity of Athens, and the questions about patrilinear filiation raised in both plays. In the following discussion I suggest many more points of contact which argue in favour of a more intensive dialogue. Segal (1999: 95-98) identifies a number of points of contact and contrast that the *Ion* shares with the whole trilogy and suggests that Euripides (p. 104) "restages the cosmic issues of the *Oresteia*, but with an almost proto-Callimachean tug at our ear, pointing out the gap between the mythical world and that of normal human experience."

I begin with Ion's assessment of the difficulties that he will face if he seeks public office in Athens: (a) the illegitimate child of a foreigner in a city of autochthons runs the danger of being thought of as totally worthless; (b) if he strives to achieve a prominent position in the city he will be hated by the powerless; (c) those who are good and capable men, but out of wisdom keep away from public life, will consider him a laughable fool if he seeks office in a city full of censure; (d) if he acquires higher office than others he will be hemmed in by their votes (589-604). All these disadvantages are summed up in the observation: "This is the way things tend to be, father. Those who control cities and enjoy privilege are full of hostility towards any rival contenders" (604-606).

Ion's fears are justified well before he goes to Athens, for Athens has paradoxically invaded Delphi. The powerless, i.e. the Chorus and the Pedagogue, present the idea that a foreigner who is both a bastard and of servile birth will rule Athens, as the Pedagogue suspects, and they convince Creusa to take action. The powerless cannot of course be viable rivals, but as becomes clear in Creusa's encounter with Ion, it is she who has taken the role of the rival; as she explains, she tried to murder him in order to defend the rights of the Erechtheid house (1291-1305).[28] What is remarkable about the reactions of the Athenian group is that they ponder the relative merits only of violent solutions. There is no prior debate whether violence is the only way.

As I have already argued the Gigantomachy, Athenian style, offers the inspiration and the means. It has often been observed that Ion's assessement of Athenian politics is anachronistic.[29] It is therefore legitimate to explore the model of reaction that the Gigantomachy offers in late-5th century terms. The two drops that Creusa has inherited from Athena via Erichthonius can either kill or heal. Without second thought she opts for the destructive weapon. There are certainly reasons. Creusa had initially planned to inquire of Apollo about the fortunes of their child

[28] For Creusa's adoption of the male role see Stehle (2009).

[29] See e.g. Owen (1939: xl-xli); Goossens (1962: 491-500); Hoffer (1996: 290 and 315); Lee (1997: 225-226).

and was first dissuaded by Ion (346-91) and subsequently prevented by the arrival of Xuthus (392-400). Moreover, Apollo had imposed secrecy on their union and has condemned her to ignorance ever since the exposure of her child. This is why she does not begin to suspect the god's initiatives behind the scenes. This is why she, exactly like the Chorus, can think only of 'their' goddess. But why do they think of their goddess as the fierce opponent of the Giants and not the persuasive negotiator who wins the terrifying Erinyes for Athens? The answer may be found in Ion's anachronistic assessment of Athenian politics: in the late 5th century rivals are most hostile to each other (πολεμιώτατοι). The city that Ion describes does not seem to enjoy the eunomia which Athena and her citizens guaranteed in the Eumenides four decades earlier. Unlike the Athens of the Oresteia, where the best citizens are chosen by Athena as judges for the Areopagus, in the Ion the best and most capable citizens wisely keep away from public life.[30]

Although Ion's assessment of the Athenians as πολεμιώτατοι is a general characterization without specific reference, it applies first and foremost to Creusa and her entourage who resort to violence on the basis of false assumptions and hasty conclusions.[31] In the Eumenides the chthonic deities and Apollo are undoubtedly extremely hostile to each other, but Athena induces them to present their case before a court of justice. The debate is fierce, but suspicion and anger are aired. In the Ion, on the other hand, the adversaries never engage in debate, they simply plot against one another.[32] To a great extent their suspicions are justified because of the secrecy of Apollo and of Xuthus who went as far as threatening the Chorus with death if they revealed his conversation with Ion to Creusa (666-67). As we have seen, however, the Athenian con-

[30] For the grim historical and political reality that Ion's assessment reflects see e.g. Goossens (1962: 491-500); Hoffer (1996: 312-17).

[31] See Burnett (1991: 112-14) for the tenuous grasp of truth that the Chorus, the Pedagogue and Creusa.

[32] For plots and counter-plots in this play see Zacharia (2003:134-138).

tingent mistakes suspicion for fact and thus misses a number of opportunities for critical assessment of the situation: When Creusa's servants reveal the news and Xuthus' plans to her and the Pedagogue, the old man creates a scenario of past and future events that is false, and attributes to Xuthus and Ion motives and plans that are not true either (808-56); the Chorus who have heard the conversation and therefore know that neither Xuthus nor Ion have evil plans for Creusa do not set the record straight. Apparently the Pedagogue's scenario sounds more convincing to them than what they have heard with their own ears. The Chorus, succumbing to their emotions which draw them to pity Creusa's presumed childlessness, make no effort to ponder the relative merits of the two different accounts. Thus Creusa and her entourage miss a good opportunity for sober reflection.[33] Creusa's immediately following confession offers yet another opportunity. Once again, however, all miss the chance for a critical re-assessment of the situation. Creusa's revelations only heighten everybody's emotional reactions that lead to preemptive action.[34] It is remarkable that none of the implicated parties questions such action on the basis of the new information. They only discuss the relative merits of three solutions, all of them involving violence: to burn down Apollo's temple, to kill Xuthus, or to kill Ion.[35] The last solution seems more viable and they settle on it. Thanks to Ion's piety and possibly Apollo's intervention Ion is saved, but Creusa is now in danger.[36] When the secretive Apolline plan and its violent Athenian alternative reach an impasse, the time for

[33] John Gibert points out to me that Creusa also fails to take into account the oracle of Trophonius according to which neither Xuthus nor she will leave Delphi childless (407-12), thus missing yet another opportunity for a more critical evaluation of the situation.

[34] The Chorus remarks that her misfortunes will bring everybody to tears (923-24), the Pedagogue expresses his pity (925) and starts crying as he learns more (967). Larue 1963 suggests that Creusa's monody gains in power through the adaptation of the hymn-form.

[35] Vengeance on Apollo: ποτίνου θεόν (972), πίμπρη ...χρηστήρια (974); murder of Xuthus: τόλμησον ...κτανε□ν (976); murder of Ion by sword (978-983) or by poison (985-1026). Note the repetition of the terms κτείνω, φόνος and synonyms throughout the stichomythia.

[36] As Burnett (1971: 117) points out, the question whether Ion has been saved by chance, by the blasphemer, by his own piety, or by the god hardly arises.

openness and persuasion comes. Apollo, who had so far averted disaster in knee-jerk manner from behind the scenes, leaves aside his whims and provides the forum and the means for human enlightenment. The instinct of self-preservation induces Creusa to trust Apollo and take refuge at his altar which, thanks to the Pythia, serves as the focal point for the critical assessment of the situation by the human agents. At the sight of the basket Creusa knows that Ion is her son. Her ability to account for each and every item in the basket convinces Ion that she is his mother. Knowledge carries persuasion and brings reconciliation. The only question that still remains unanswered is the identity of the father. Ion's ever inquisitive mind is not at rest: does Creusa tell the truth? And is Apollo a reliable prophet? This is the question that will receive an authoritative answer from Athena, the skillful negotiator of the Eumenides, who will affirm Ion's Apolline paternity, will support the plan of her brother, and will give plenty to Ion, Creusa, and Xuthus.

III. VIOLENCE: DEFAULT OPTION IN A WARRYING CITY

Before exploring further points of contact and contrast between the Ion and the Eumenides, I will discuss the significance of impetuous decision-making based on mere suspicion for contemporary Athenian politics. The Ion, ordinarily labeled a patriotic play, reflects a number of late fifth-century political issues such as discontent with the Delphic oracle, xenophobia, the status of metics, cut-throat political rivalry, and strained relations between Athens and her allies. These controversies find a happy resolution in the mythical Athens of the play, which emerges as a self-confident and all-inclusive city.[37] The happy resolution, however,

[37] Walsh (1978: 313): "Each point of the play's historical topicality reflects a controversial issue among the members of Euripides' audience, rather than appealing to their shared ideological reflexes. The resolution of the play is designed to render these controversies moot by constructing a world in which finally there is no occasion for controversy. Against the conflict of class loyalty and patriotism, the Ion depicts the Athenians as sharing a common εὐγένεια; against the conflict of Athens and her allies, and disputes among the Athenians about the treatment of rebellious subjects, the Ion presents the shared heritage of Ionians and Athenians, discovered in triumph over

is achieved through a long and painful process which is fraught with suspicion and a clear penchant for violent solutions that characterize the reactions of Creusa, the Pedagogue, and the Chorus. Ion also entertains the possibility of violent action, but stops short first out of piety and then through the intervention of the Pythia.

The propensity towards violence on stage reflects a climate familiar from Thucydides in Athens and elsewhere from early in the Peloponnesian war and onward. The date of the production of the Ion is unknown. Various dates between 419 and 410 have been proposed, but most scholars date it between 413 and 411 on the basis of style and content.[38] I will offer a further argument in favor of a post-413 date in the concluding section. As we shall see, from the perspective of the Athenian penchant to violence a date after the Sicilian disaster does not alter the picture significantly, but it certainly chimes better with the growing anxiety, suspicion, and fear in a city that had suffered great loss and humiliation.[39]

It is worth turning first to Thucydides' celebrated description of preemptive action which the Athenian historian associates with the internal strife in Corcyra, but points out that it soon spread to the rest of the Greek world and would continue to occur in milder or more severe forms, depending on the circumstances, as long as human nature remains the

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ignorance, hostility, and fear; in response to the problem of foreigners in Athens the play presents Ion in the position of a metic and then reveals that he is the most fundamentally Athenian character imaginable, his blood diluted but with a god's." See also Loraux (1981) Saxonhouse (1986) on the impassable boundaries for women and foreigners that the autochthony myth creates.

[38] Scholars who think that Euripides' treatment of the Athenian empire is general enough to be appropriate both at periods of high and of low morale date the play between 420 and 410; see e.g. Willets (1973: 205) and recently Swift (2009: 28-30). Others date it around 418 or 417: see e.g. Owen (1939: xxxvi-xli); Goossens (1962:503 n. 1.) In favour of a later date see the discussion in Zacharia (2003:3-7), who produces additional arguments in support of 412.

[39] The difficulty of dating the play on internal criteria has been pointed out time and again. Zuntz (1955:64), for instance, points out that the image of the Athenian empire which Athena puts forward "would be appreciated by the audience at any time (and no less so, if at the time of the performance they were fighting to retain or recover it)".

same[40]:

ὁ δὲ πόλεμος ὑφελὼν τὴν εὐπορίαν τοῦ καθ᾽ ἡμέραν βίαιος διδάσκαλος καὶ πρὸς τὰ παρόντα τὰς ὀργὰς τῶν πολλῶν ὁμοιοῖ.

3.82. 2

τὸ δ᾽ ἐμπλήκτως ὀξὺ ἀνδρὸς μοίρᾳ προσετέθη, ἀσφαλείᾳ δὲ τὸ ἐπιβουλεύσασθαι ἀποτροπῆς πρόφασις εὔλογος. καὶ ὁ μὲν χαλεπαίνων πιστὸς αἰεί, ὁ δ᾽ ἀντιλέγων αὐτῷ ὕποπτος. ἐπιβουλεύσας δέ τις τυχὼν ξυνετὸς καὶ ὑπονοήσας ἔτι δεινότερος: προβουλεύσας δὲ ὅπως μηδὲν αὐτῶν δεήσει, τῆς τε ἑταιρίας διαλυτὴς καὶ τοὺς ἐναντίους ἐκπεπληγμένος. ἁπλῶς δὲ ὁ φθάσας τὸν μέλλοντα κακόν τι δρᾶν ἐπῃνεῖτο, καὶ ὁ ἐπικελεύσας τὸν μὴ διανοούμενον.

3. 82, 4- 5

But war is a stern teacher; in depriving them of the power of easily satisfying their daily wants, it brings most people's minds down to the level of their actual circumstances. Fanatical enthusiasm was the mark of a real man, and to plot against an enemy behind his back was perfectly legitimate self-defence. Anyone who held violent opinions could always be trusted, and anyone who objected to them became a suspect. To plot successfully was a sign of intelligence, but it was still cleverer to see that a plot was hatching. If one attempted to provide against having to do either, one was disrupting the unity of the party and acting out of fear

[40] Thucydides 3. 82. 1-2: οὕτως ὠμὴ <ἡ> στάσις προυχώρησε, καὶ ἔδοξε μᾶλλον, διότι ἐν τοῖς πρώτη ἐγένετο, ἐπεὶ ὕστερόν γε καὶ πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκινήθη,[...] καὶ ἐπέπεσε πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ κατὰ στάσιν ταῖς πόλεσι, γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾖ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαίτερα καὶ τοῖς εἴδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἕκασται αἱ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχιῶν ἐφιστῶνται. In the next section (3. 82. 3) Thucydides states that the Corcyrean example became paradigmatic for even greater atrocities: ἐστασίαζέ τε οὖν τὰ τῶν πόλεων, καὶ τὰ ἐφυστερίζοντά που πύστει τῶν προγενομένων πολὺ ἐπέφερε τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τοῦ καινοῦσθαι τὰς διανοίας τῶν τ᾽ ἐπιχειρήσεων περιτεχνήσει καὶ τῶν τιμωριῶν ἀτοπίᾳ. All quotations are taken from Jones & Powell's Oxford edition; the translations of the quoted passages are those of Rex Wagner.

of the opposition. In short, it was equally praise-worthy to get one's blow in first against someone who was going to do wrong, and to denounce someone who had no intention of doing any wrong at all. In the Ion plot, counter-plot, suspicion, detection, and preemptive action on false premises is, as we have seen, an all-pervading theme. Like Thucydides, Euripides' audience was familiar with such tactics in everyday life, but the dramatic treatment offers the opportunity to see the absurd and comic side of danger and fear and therefore also offers respite.

We may now turn from the pathology of civil strife in Corcyra and elsewhere to Athens in order to trace the cumulative effect of suspicion and violence as the war drew on focusing on a few representative examples that in combination cast light on the harsh and unfair treatment of allies and fellow-citizens by the Athenians and on the fear of eminent citizens at the prospect of such an unfair treatment.

(i) 423: Athenian reactions against the Mytileneans

I begin with the impetuous decision which the Athenians reached in a state of anger (ὑπὸ ὀργῆς, 3. 36. 2) to kill not only the Mytilenean hostages in Athens, but every adult male in Mytilene, and to enslave the children and the women in the summer of 427. Soon afterwards they came to regret their savage and unjust decision and decided to deliberate further (καὶ τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ μετάνοιά τις εὐθὺς ἦν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἀναλογισμὸς ὠμὸν τὸ βούλευμα καὶ μέγα ἐγνῶσθαι, πόλιν ὅλην διαφθεῖραι μᾶλλον ἢ οὐ τοὺς αἰτίους, 3. 36. 4). Cleon advised against further deliberation, but did not prevail, thanks to Diodotus' sober arguments. Diodotus' criticism of Cleon's advice against further debate on an issue of such magnitude runs as follows:

'οὔτε τοὺς προθέντας τὴν διαγνώμην αὖθις περὶ Μυτιληναίων αἰτιῶμαι, οὔτε τοὺς μεμφομένους μὴ πολλάκις περὶ τῶν μεγίστων βουλεύεσθαι ἐπαινῶ, νομίζω δὲ δύο τὰ ἐναντιώτατα εὐβουλίᾳ εἶναι, τάχος τε καὶ ὀργήν, ὧν τὸ μὲν μετὰ ἀνοίας φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι, τὸ δὲ μετὰ ἀπαιδευσίας καὶ βραχύτητος γνώμης . τούς τε λόγους ὅστις διαμάχεται μὴ διδασκάλους τῶν

πραγμάτων γίγνεσθαι, ἢ ἀξύνετός ἐστιν ἢ ἰδίᾳ τι αὐτῷ διαφέρει: ἀξύνετος μέν, εἰ ἄλλῳ τινὶ ἡγεῖται περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος δυνατὸν εἶναι καὶ μὴ ἐμφανοῦς φράσαι, διαφέρει δ᾽ αὐτῷ, εἰ βουλόμενός τι αἰσχρὸν πεῖσαι εὖ μὲν εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἂν ἡγεῖται περὶ τοῦ μὴ καλοῦ δύνασθαι, εὖ δὲ διαβαλὼν ἐκπλῆξαι ἂν τούς τε ἀντεροῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἀκουσομένους.

3. 42, 1-2

I do not blame those who have proposed a new debate on the subject of Mytilene, and I do not share the view which we have heard expressed, that it is a bad thing to have frequent discussions on matters of importance. Haste and anger are, to my mind, the two greatest obstacles to wise counsel -haste, that usually goes with folly, anger, that is the mark of primitive and narrow minds. And anyone who maintains that words cannot be a guide to action must be either a fool or one with some personal interest at stake; he is a fool, if he imagines that it is possible to deal with the uncertainties of the future by any other medium, and he is personally interested if his aim is to persuade you into some disgraceful action, and, knowing that he cannot make a good speech in a bad cause, he tries to frighten his opponents and his hearers by some good-sized pieces of misrepresentation.

(ii) 415: The punishment of the profaners of the Mysteries

In the case of the Mytileneans sober deliberation enabled the Athenians to revoke their initial decision just in time, but their suspicion of the oligarchic or tyrannical aspirations of the alleged profaners of the Mysteries that led to the execution of a great number of suspects on the basis of unverified conjectures and to the defection of Alcibiades to the enemy camp had irrevocably disastrous results.

ὧν ἐνθυμούμενος ὁ δῆμος ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, καὶ μιμνῃσκόμενος ὅσα ἀκοῇ περὶ αὐτῶν ἠπίστατο, χαλεπὸς ἦν τότε καὶ ὑπόπτης ἐς τοὺς περὶ τῶν μυστικῶν τὴν αἰτίαν λαβόντας, καὶ πάντα αὐτοῖς ἐδόκει ἐπὶ ξυνωμοσίᾳ ὀλιγαρχικῇ καὶ τυραννικῇ πεπρᾶχθαι καὶ ὡς αὐτῶν διὰ τὸ τοιοῦτον ὀργιζομένων πολλοί

τε καὶ ἀξιόλογοι ἄνθρωποι ἤδη ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ ἦσαν καὶ οὐκ ἐν παύλῃ ἐφαίνετο, ἀλλὰ καθ᾽ ἡμέραν ἐπεδίδοσαν μᾶλλον ἐς τὸ ἀγριώτερόν τε καὶ πλείους ἔτι ξυλλαμβάνειν, ἐνταῦθα ἀναπείθεται εἷς τῶν δεδεμένων, ὅσπερ ἐδόκει αἰτιώτατος εἶναι, ὑπὸ τῶν ξυνδεσμωτῶν τινὸς εἴτε ἄρα καὶ τὰ ὄντα μηνῦσαι εἴτε καὶ οὔ: ἐπ᾽ ἀμφότερα γὰρ εἰκάζεται, τὸ δὲ σαφὲς οὐδεὶς οὔτε τότε οὔτε ὕστερον ἔχει εἰπεῖν περὶ τῶν δρασάντων τὸ ἔργον. λέγων δὲ ἔπεισεν αὐτὸν ὡς χρή, εἰ μὴ καὶ δέδρακεν, αὑτόν τε ἄδειαν ποιησάμενον σῶσαι καὶ τὴν πόλιν τῆς παρούσης ὑποψίας παῦσαι: βεβαιοτέραν γὰρ αὐτῷ σωτηρίαν εἶναι ὁμολογήσαντι μετ᾽ ἀδείας ἢ ἀρνηθέντι διὰ δίκης ἐλθεῖν. καὶ ὁ μὲν αὐτός τε καθ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ κατ᾽ ἄλλων μηνύει τὸ τῶν Ἑρμῶν: ὁ δὲ δῆμος ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἄσμενος λαβών, ὡς ᾤετο, τὸ σαφὲς καὶ δεινὸν ποιούμενοι πρότερον εἰ τοὺς ἐπιβουλεύοντας σφῶν τῷ πλήθει μὴ εἴσονται, τὸν μὲν μηνυτὴν εὐθὺς καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ ὅσων μὴ κατηγορήκει ἔλυσαν, τοὺς δὲ καταιτιαθέντας κρίσεις ποιήσαντες τοὺς μὲν ἀπέκτειναν, ὅσοι ξυνελήφθησαν, τῶν δὲ διαφυγόντων θάνατον καταγνόντες ἐπανεῖπον ἀργύριον τῷ ἀποκτείναντι. κἀν τούτῳ οἱ μὲν παθόντες ἄδηλον ἦν εἰ ἀδίκως ἐτετιμώρηντο, ἡ μέντοι ἄλλη πόλις ἐν τῷ παρόντι περιφανῶς ὠφέλητο. (6. 60)

> These events had impressed themselves on the people of Athens and, recalling everything that they had heard about them, they were now in an angry and suspicious mood with regard to those who had been accused in connection with the mysteries; everything that had happened was, they thought, part of a plot aiming at setting up an oligarchy or a dictatorship.
>
> With public opinion inflamed as it was, there were already a number of worthy citizens in prison and there was no sign of things getting any easier; in fact every day showed an increase in savagery and led to more arrests being made.

> At this point one of the prisoners who was thought to be most guilty was persuaded by a fellow-prisoner to come forward with information which may have been either true or false. Both opinions are held, though in fact no one, either then or later, was able to say for certain who did the deed. The one prisoner, however, succeeded in persuading the other that it was better for him, even if he had not done it, to make himself safe by getting a promise of impunity and to put an end to the present state of suspicion in the city; for he would be in a safer position if he made a confession with impunity than if he denied the charges and was brought to trial. The prisoner in question therefore came forward with information incriminating himself and others with regard to the Hermae. The Athenian people were delighted at having now, as they imagined, discovered the truth, after having been previously in a terrible state at the idea that the conspirators against the democracy might never be found out. They at once released the informer himself, and with him all whom he had not accused. Those against whom he had given evidence were brought to trial and all who were secured were put to death. The death sentence was passed on all who managed to escape and a price was set on their heads. In all this it was impossible to say whether those who suffered deserved their punishment or not, but it was quite clear that the rest of the city, as things were, benefited greatly.

In the case of Alcibiades Thucydides also links closely together the gathering cloud of suspicion (πανταχόθεν τε περιειστήκει ὑποψία ἐς τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην) with the resolution of the Athenians to bring him to trial and execute him (ὥστε βουλόμενοι αὐτὸν ἐς κρίσιν ἀγαγόντες ἀπόκτεῖναι). Out of fear of facing trial under such suspicion-laden circumstances Alcibiades and his fellow-suspects decide not to follow the ship Salaminia all the way to Athens (δείσαντες τὸ ἐπὶ διαβολῆς ἐς δίκην καταπλεῦσαι,6.61).

(iii) 413: Nicias' fear of Athenian reactions

Fear for an unfair trial and execution is, according to Thucydides, a factor that weighs heavily on Nicias' decision not to bring back the expedition from Sicily to Athens without a formal recall:

εὖ γὰρ εἰδέναι ὅτι Ἀθηναῖοι σφῶν ταῦτα οὐκ ἀποδέξονται, ὥστε μὴ αὐτῶν ψηφισαμένων ἀπελθεῖν. καὶ γὰρ οὐ τοὺς αὐτοὺς ψηφιεῖσθαί τε περὶ σφῶν [αὐτῶν] καὶ τὰ πράγματα ὥσπερ καὶ αὐτοὶ ὁρῶντας καὶ οὐκ ἄλλων ἐπιτιμήσει ἀκούσαντας γνώσεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐξ ὧν ἄν τις εὖ λέγων διαβάλλοι, ἐκ τούτων αὐτοὺς πείσεσθαι τῶν τε παρόντων στρατιωτῶν πολλοὺς καὶ τοὺς πλείους ἐφη, οἳ νῦν βοῶσιν ὡς ἐν δεινοῖς ὄντες, ἐκεῖσε ἀφικομένους τἀναντία βοήσεσθαι ὡς ὑπὸ χρημάτων καταπροδόντες οἱ στρατηγοὶ ἀπῆλθον. οὔκουν βούλεσθαι αὐτός γε ἐπιστάμενος τὰς Ἀθηναίων φύσεις ἐπ' αἰσχρᾷ τε αἰτίᾳ καὶ ἀδίκως ὑπ' Ἀθηναίων ἀπολέσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων, εἰ δεῖ, κινδυνεύσας τοῦτο παθεῖν ἰδίᾳ (7. 48. 3-4)

He was sure, he said, that the Athenians would not approve of the withdrawal, unless it had been voted for at Athens. They themselves could see the facts as they were and reach a decision about them without having to depend on the reports of hostile critics; but this was not the case with the voters in Athens, whose judgments would be swayed by any clever speech designed to create prejudice. He said, too, that many, in fact most of the soldiers in Sicily who were now crying out so loudly about their desperate position, would, as soon as they got to Athens , entirely change their tune and would say that the generals had been bribed to betray them and return. For his own part, therefore, knowing the Athenian character as he did, rather than be put to death on a disgraceful charge and by an unjust verdict of the Athenians, he preferred to take his chance and, if it must be, to meet his own death himself at the hands of the enemy.

Nicias fears both the Athenians at home, who judging the generals' decision on the basis of inadequate knowledge of the battlefield, could easily be influenced by any slanderer, and the returning soldiers' change of heart, who may suspect that generals decided to return

because they were bribed. Weighing the possibility of dishonorable execution in Athens and death by the enemy, Nicias opts for the latter. Euripides' light and at times comical touch, the tragic irony, and the happy resolution should not obscure the similar picture of an Athenian propensity towards violence that emerges from the dramatic and the historical account: mere suspicion of conspiracy leads to the decision of capital punishment without sober reflection and without proof.[41] In mythical Athens Hermes, Apollo, and Athena all give a hand to save the house of Erechtheus from self-destruction, and this must have been a welcome brief escape for the audience of the play who had first-hand experience of their predicament in an embattled city engaged in a long war.

IV. THE SCULPTURES OF THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO: SEEING VIOLENCE

Creusa and her entourage are πολεμιώτατοι, ready not only to apply violence without second thought, but to spot it instantly everywhere in the magnificent Alcmaeonid temple of Apollo in Delphi. It is worth noting that in describing the various combats the Chorus focus, invariably, on the annihilation of the defeated: ναίρει (of the Hydra, v. 191), ναίρει (of Chimaera, v. 203), καταιθαλοῖ (of Mimas, v. 215), ναίρει (of an unnamed Giant, v. 218). I agree with Lee's point that the "struggle described here by the Chorus will be rehearsed in the attempt on Ion's life, and in his retaliation."[42] What is also significant, in my view, is that all the Chorus see in the sanctuary is violence. The sculptural representations of the combats of Heracles and Iolaus with the Hydra and of Bellerophon with the Chimaera have not been found, but whether real or fictive, their mention is in keeping with the Chorus' predilection for violence.[43] By focusing

[41] I have chosen to focus only on selected Thucydidean passages that highlight impetuous violence caused by mere suspicion; for a survey of common patterns of thought in Euripides and Thucydides see Finley (1938).

[42] Lee (1997) 178. See also Zeitlin (1996) 299 who suggests that Creusa, in her attempt to kill Ion, reenacts the role of the earth-born Gorgon.

[43] Scholars assume that they were the decorative theme of metopes; see e.g. Hose (1990:135), Lee

on violence, however, and especially on the Gigantomachy which is described only once, but resurfaces in various visual forms several times, the Chorus miss the impressive façade of the temple that depicted the peaceful scene of Apollo's arrival in Delphi. In what follows I focus on the ironic effect of the superimposition of the invisible onto the visible.

It has often been observed that the artifacts which the Chorus singles out for mention are sights which they would have seen in Athens.[44] This is certainly true of the Gigantomachy: it decorated the peplos offered to Athena and was also the theme of the metopes of the façade of the Parthenon.[45] Indeed all three gods that the Chorus chooses for mention have been identified with reasonable certainty as the subject of the Parthenon metopes. The central metope (8) features Zeus attacking a giant, while on the left side metopes from the viewer's point of view (2 and 4 respectively) Dionysus and Athena are represented attacking one opponent each.[46] The offering of the peplos to Athena was the subject of the central scene (V) of the frieze that decorated the façade of the Parthenon.[47] But why did Euripides opt for a Chorus who see in Delphi what they see ordinarily in Athens? There is irony at play, which would be appreciated by those in the audience who were familiar with the Delphic sanctuary and its monuments. Before turning to those who could appreciate the irony, I only add that the Chorus' preoccupation with familiar sights is consistent with their predilection for Athenian themes and points up their rather limited horizons, which are evident in their delight to discover that it is not only Athens that has nice temples and altars (184-87).

Euripides could certainly count on the familiarity of his audience with visual representations of the Gigantomachy and in all likelihood depictions of Bellerophon, Heracles, and Iolaus, but he could also count on the familiarity of a great number of his audience with Apollo's temple. As Hourmouziades observes,

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(1997:180 ad 191-200).

[44] See e.g. Goossens (1962: 481 with n. 9) and Immerwahr (1972).

[45] See Vian (1951: 18, no. 31) and Immerwahr (1972:284-85).

[46] See Choremi-Spetsieri (2004: 94-95) for pictures and reconstructions.

[47] Choremi - Spetsieri (2004) 204-211, 222-23 with an excellent picture of the scene (no. 184)

The oracle of Phoebus was part of a definite physical and architectural compound. How much of it comes into play? In other words: with how much of it was the spectator made acquainted in order to localize the action in its appropriate atmosphere? It is very probable that a large number of the audience had been to Delphi, and therefore the mere mention of its name may have evoked recent memories.[48]

There was indeed a variety of occasions on which people visited the sanctuary. Many of them had visited Delphi to inquire of the god as private individuals, as official theoroi, as athletes, or as spectators of the games. The importance of unobstructed access to Delphi is evident from the special provision made in the truce of 423, which was signed by Nicias and Nicostratus on behalf of the Athenians (Περὶ μὲν τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ τοῦ μαντείου τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τοῦ Πυθίου δοκεῖ ἡμῖν χρῆσθαι τὸν βουλόμενον ἀδόλως καὶ ἀδεῶς κατὰ τοὺς πατρίους νόμους, 4. 118. 1).[49]

The archaic temple of Apollo in Delphi was in many important ways an Athenian monument and therefore of great interest to the Athenians. Its restoration was undertaken by the Alcmaeonids in the late 6th century in their effort to exercise influence on the Delphic oracle and overthrow the Pisistratids. Herodotus reports that the Alcmaeonids improved the original plans and contributed funds in order to make the façade out of Parian marble.[50] The sculptures of the East pediment have been attributed to the famous Athenian sculptor Antenor on stylistic grounds.[51] As early as 486 Pindar attributed the restoration of the temple to the Athenians at large and made special mention of the glory it bestowed on them on a Panhellenic scale in the victory song he composed for the Alcmaeonid Megacles:

[48] Hourmouziades (1965: 111).

[49] The same provision, phrased more broadly in order to include all Panhellenic sanctuaries, was subsequently incorporated in the treaty that sealed the peace of Nicias two years later (Thuc. 5. 18. 1-2).

[50] Herodotus 5. 62.

[51] See La Coste-Messelière (1931: 33-62).

Πάσαισι γὰρ πολεῖσι λόγος ὁμιλεῖ
Ἐρεχθέος ἀστῶν, Ἄπολλον, οἳ τεὸν
δόμον Πυθῶνι δίᾳ θαητὸν ἔτευξαν.[52] (Pythian 7, 9-12)
None, for among all cities travels the report
About Erechtheus' citizens, Apollo, who made your temple in divine Pytho splendid to behold.

As we shall see in a moment, Aeschylus also alludes to the pedimental sculptures in the prologue of the Eumenides.

Before turning to the Eumenides, a brief survey of the pedimental scene of the façade of the temple and its interpretations is in order (plates 2 & 2a).[53] Apollo, mounted on a four-horse chariot, occupies the centre of the pediment. At his left side we see three male figures. The one closest to the chariot is turned towards the god. At the corner a lion attacks a deer. At the god's right we see three female figures and a lion attacking a bull. The scene has been interpreted as (a) a timeless epiphany of Apollo or his advent and installation in Delphi, (b) Apollo's arrival from the

Hyperboreans, and (c) Apollo's installation in Delphi with an escort of Athenians. [54] Whichever interpretation one adopts, it is fair to say that on the human level Apollo's epiphany or installation in Delphi is a peaceful scene. Violence, in the form of animal conflict, has been pushed to the fringes of the main scene which highlights Apollo's triumphal arrival and welcoming reception by men and women.

The interpretation of the scene as Apollo's installation with an escort of Athenians, which has been so far the dominant view, is based on the Pythia's account of the history of the oracle in the opening of the Eumenides:

[52] The Pindaric quotation is taken from Snell-Maehler's Teubner edition, the translation is Race's.

[53] Plate 2: Reconstruction by La Coste-Messelière (1931); Plate 2a: Delphi Museum, personal archive.

[54] For a survey of the various interpretations and bibliographical references see Marconi (1996-7)

Τιτανὶς ἄλλη παῖς Χθονὸς καθέζετο,
Φοίβη: δίδωσι δ᾽ ἣ γενέθλιον δόσιν
Φοίβῳ: τὸ Φοίβης δ᾽ ὄνομ᾽ ἔχει παρώνυμον.
λιπὼν δὲ λίμνην Δηλίαν τε χοιράδα,
κέλσας ἐπ᾽ ἀκτὰς ναυπόρους τὰς Παλλάδος,
ἐς τήνδε γαῖαν ἦλθε Παρνησοῦ θ᾽ ἕδρας.
πέμπουσι δ᾽ αὐτὸν καὶ σεβίζουσιν μέγα
κελευθοποιοὶ παῖδες Ἡφαίστου, χθόνα
ἀνήμερον τιθέντες ἡμερωμένην.
μολόντα δ᾽ αὐτὸν κάρτα τιμαλφεῖ λεώς,
Δελφός τε χώρας τῆσδε πρυμνήτης ἄναξ.
τέχνης δέ νιν Ζεὺς ἔνθεον κτίσας φρένα
ἵζει τέταρτον τοῖσδε μάντιν ἐν θρόνοις:

another Titan daughter of Earth was seated here.
This was Phoebe. She gave it as a birthday gift
to Phoebus, who is called still after Phoebe's name.
And he, leaving the pond of Delos and the reef,
grounded his ship at the roadstead of Pallas, then
made his way to this land and a Parnassian home.
Deep in respect for his degree Hephaestus' sons
conveyed him here, for these are builders of roads, and changed
the wilderness to a land that was no wilderness.
He came so, and the people highly honored him,
with Delphus, lord and helmsman of the country. Zeus
made his mind full with godship and prophetic craft
and placed him, fourth in a line of seers, upon this throne

It has long been recognized that the installation of Apollo in Delphi with an escort of Athenians is the aition of the Athenian theoria known as Pythaïs.[55] Plassart, who first correlated the Pythia's reference to the Pythaïs with the East pediment, identified the scene of the façade as the arche-

[55] For the Pythaïs see Boëthius (1918)

typal Pythaïs. The male figure who welcomes the god is king Delphus. The two youths next to him are the Athenians who escorted Apollo to Delphi opening roads and taming the wild earth.[56] As Plassart recognized, the meaning of the scene would be unambiguous if the Athenian youths were carrying axes.[57]

Evaluating the merits of the different interpretations of the East Pediment is well beyond the scope of this paper. I will therefore restrict myself to a general observation based on the various identifications of the male and female figures that surround the god. Scholars who accept Plassart's interpretation have proposed solutions that either strengthen or balance the Athenocentric character of the scene. Lapalus, for instance, has suggested that the female figures represent Athenian maidens and Bousquet has identified them as the Aglaurids.[58] Others have sought to balance the Athenocentric character of the scene by suggesting Delphic themes. Dörig, for instance, has identified the female figures as Gaia, Themis, and Phoebe, whereas Kritzas has argued in favor of the Muses.[59] As has been mentioned, there are other scholars who either opt for a generic epiphany or a non-Athenian related scene.[60] In view of the political agenda of the Alcmaeonids, their financial contribution to the improvement of the façade, and the Athenian origin of the sculptor it seems unlikely that they did not push for a theme that at most would foreground Athenian presence in Delphi, at least it would not exclude it. The question is how pronounced this presence was iconographically. In light of the remains of the pediment, there can be no definitive answer, but the question is worth exploring from the point of view of the reception

[56] Plassart (1940).

[57] Plassart (1940) 297: "Aux mains des deux kouroi de face, il nous faut restituer, non pas (avec F. Courby) la lance ni l' arc, mais les haches, qui ont frayé la voie à travers l' épaisseur des forêts primitives."

[58] See Lapalus (1947) 146-47; Bousquet (1964).

[59] Dörig (1967) 108-9; Kritzas (1980) 208.

[60] See, for instance, Marconi (1996-97) and Marconi (2007) 192-93, who argues in favour of a local hieros logos, i. e. Apollo's arrival from the Hyperboreans.

of the scene in the 5th century. If the youths, for instance, were carrying axes, as Plassart suggested, the evocation of the sons of Hephaestus and therefore of the Pythaïs would be inescapable. If, on the other hand, there was no iconographic indication tying the scene to a particular event, the scene would be open to interpretation right from the moment of its completion. In case of a generic representation, viewers could interpret the scene as an epiphany, Apollo's return from the Hyperboreans, or as the archetypal Pythaïs.

For the early reception of the scene we have two invaluable responses. As we have seen, Pindar tells us that in every city there is talk about the citizens of Erechtheus who built a brilliant temple to Apollo.[61] Pindar of course has in mind contemporary Athenians, but the mention of Erechtheus inevitably evokes their autochthonous origin and their forefathers, the sons of Hephaestus, who according to Aeschylus escorted Apollo to Delphi, clearing his path.[62] Did Pindar see anything on the pediment that triggered the memory of Erechtheus or did Megacles tell him that the two youths were in fact sons of Hephaestus? We have no way of knowing, but neither possibility should be excluded in light of the fact that almost thirty years later Aeschylus makes the Pythia give an account of the Pythaïs on stage. As in the case of Euripides, we have no way of knowing if there was a stage representation of the temple of Apollo and what it may have been. We can be reasonably sure, however, that like Euripides Aeschylus counted on the familiarity of many in his audience with the temple that the Alcmaeonids had restored some fifty years earlier. Whether the Pythia refreshed their memory or gave them a new, Athenocentric, way of looking at the brilliant pediment upon their next visit is a moot point. The effort, however, to foreground Athenian prominence in the installation of the god in Delphi - in legend, ritual, and in all likelihood monumental art - is indisputable.

[61] For a detailed discussion of Pindar's allusions to the pediment see Athanassaki (2009a) 273-85

[62] For the use of the patronymic 'Erechtheids' with reference to all Athenians see also the discussion of Loraux (1981) 45-57.

It is time to go back to Euripides and examine the effect of the Chorus' blindness to the foremost sight for any pilgrim to the sanctuary, let alone the Athenians (plate 3).[63] Many in Euripides' audience had seen and admired the façade of the Alcmaeonid temple and others must have known it from hearsay.[64] The aim of Ion's deictic reference to the four-horse chariot of the Sun in his monody may well have been to trigger the memory of the chariot of Apollo which was the backdrop of his utterance: ἅρματα μὲν τάδε λαμπρὰ τεθρίππων· Ἥλιος ἤδη λάμπει κατὰ γῆν (82-83).[65] Viewed as a subtle reminder of the temple's façade, Ion's allusion would have prepared the spectators who were familiar with the temple to marvel at the Chorus'keen eye for violence that made them totally oblivious to the peaceful scene of Apollo's arrival in Delphi, which was after all made possible by the contribution of an Athenian family. This audience's knowledge that the Gigantomachy was depicted on the façade of the Parthenon further heightened the irony, since it made clear that the Chorus, blind to the peaceful scene right before their eyes, had such a predilection for a theme familiar from home so as to see it everywhere, even if it were invisible under normal circumstances. Creusa's golden bracelet, the visual epitome of violence, and her unfinished handiwork clearly kept the Gigantomachy as a spectacle in the foreground till the end of the play, thus offering the audience plenty of opportunity to appreciate the irony of the incursion of Gigantomachy-inspired artifacts on stage, which constituted a sharp visual contrast to their mental image of Apollo's serene arrival in Delphi. The irony would be, of course, obvious to all if Euripides had opted for stage representation of both pediments as Kar-

[63] Plate 3: Reconstruction F. Courby = Lacoste 1920.

[64] Fantuzzi, forthcoming also thinks that most of the members of Euripides' audience would be familiar with the temple of Apollo

[65] Taking as a starting point the iconography of the façade and pointing out that Helios is Apollo's doublet Zeitlin (1994) 151 remarks: "In this instance, however, Euripides may be playing a subtler game, one that appeals to a well-known iconography (at Delphi) as a way of establishing the more significant dramatic fact that, despite all expectations, the figure of Apollo will never appear in the play."

elisa Hartigan has suggested.[66] Moreover, those familiar with Aeschylus' masterpiece would have perceived a clear difference between the peaceful archetypal theoria of the sons of Hephaestus and the belligerent climate of the visit of Erechtheus' daughter. These spectators who already knew the outcome of the Ion from Hermes' prologue would also find that the scene of the peaceful departure of Creusa and Xuthus in the company of Apollo's son for Athens had more in common with the sculptural theme of the East than the West pediment that had preoccupied the Athenians during their visit to Delphi. Finally, whatever familiarity with Delphi different members of the audience had, it is fair to assume that all or almost all knew that, thanks to the Alcmaeonids, Athens played a decisive role in the restoration of the famous temple.

V. ATHENS AND DELPHI: A PLAYFUL REMINDER OF OLD TIES

In the preceding discussion I argued that (i) the three Gigantomachy-related artifacts have offered the Athenian contingent the inspiration, the model and the means for violent action; (ii) the relentless challenge of Apollo's authority on stage and his inability to carry through his plan without the help of Athena in the Ion and the Eumenides are important points of contact between the Euripidean and the Aeschylean plays and invite further comparison. The cardinal difference between the mythical Athens in the Eumenides and the Ion is that, whereas the Aeschylean representation brings out the eunomia which is achieved through intense public debate and persuasion, the Euripidean depiction privileges the suspicion that arises from secrecy and half-truths and the violence that results from the absence of sober reflection and debate; (iii) despite Euripides' light and at times comical treatment the issues he raises are very similar, if not identical, with the grim sociopolitical reality which Thucydides depicts, where impetuous, suspicion-driven, decision-making leads to great disaster. The fact that the danger of secrecy, suspicion, and impetuous violence are neutralized through the intervention of gods

[66] Reference and quotation in n. 5

in the dramatic reality should not obscure their threatening presence in a world where gods do not intervene to save people from their mistakes; (iv) whereas Aeschylus reminds his audience of the façade of the temple of Apollo in order to strengthen the ties of Athens with Delphi, Euripides makes his Chorus describe the back side of the temple, invisible to them, in order to highlight their blindness to a magnificent artwork which was in many ways an Athenian achievement and therefore a constant reminder of the prominence of Athens in Delphi.[67] This is the issue that I will further explore in this section.

The challenge to Apollo's oracular reliability has been explained as Euripides' reaction to the pro-Spartan sympathies of the oracle during the Peloponnesian War.[68] In principle I do not disagree with this view, but my comparative reading of the Ion and the Eumenides leads me to a modified interpretation. Thucydides reports that when the Spartans inquired of Apollo whether they should go to war against Athens, the god told them that they will win if they fight with all their might and that he will be on their side whether they seek his help or not (ὁ δὲ ἀνεῖλεν αὐτοῖς, ὡς λέγεται, κατὰ κράτος πολεμοῦσι νίκην ἔσεσθαι, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔφη συλλήψεσθαι καὶ παρακαλούμενος καὶ ἄκλητος, 1. 118. 3). Whatever one thinks about the historicity of this oracle, the fact that Thucydides chose to report it implies that it must have been used as a propaganda tool to demoralize the Athenians and their allies.[69] The oracle contains a

[67] According to some critics Athens was the setting of Sophocles' Creusa, of which very few fragments survive: see Goossens (1962) 483 with references to earlier scholarship and Burnett (1971) 103. If indeed the Sophoclean play was set in Athens, Euripides' choice of Delphi was due not simply to his wish to innovate on Sophocles' version, as Goossens ibid. proposes, but also to a wish to remind the Athenians of their city's contribution to the restoration of the temple of Apollo.

[68] See e.g. Owen (1939) xxi; Goossens (1962) 484-86 with bibliographical references; Gellie (1984) 96; see also next note

[69] Fontenrose (1978) 33 and 246 (H 5) suggests that the Pythia added the promise of Apollo's support thus expressing the Delphians' pro-Spartan sympathies to Apollo's command or sanction of the war. Bowden (2005) 63 after a brief survey of Apollo's visual representations on Attic vases suggests that "if this supposed response was known in Athens at the time, there would have been some value in Athenian public art reinforcing the view that Apollo was in fact standing by the Athenians, the message also of Euripides' Ion."

prediction, i.e. the Spartans will win the war if they fight hard, and a promise, Apollo will be on their side whether they invite him or not.
If we view the Ion as an attempt to boost Athenian morale and affirm the favor and support of gods at a time of crisis, two interesting counters to the claims of the pro-Spartan sympathies of Delphic Oracle emerge: the unreliability of the oracle and the care of Apollo for Ion and Creusa.[70] Apollo's truthfulness is seriously challenged in this play and is not restored in Athena's speech. Yet he has been a caring father. The message is that, like other gods, the god of prophecy can be unreliable too and that sometimes his prophecies may not be what one expects to hear; but the attitude of mortals is not impeccable either, because they do not ask the god the right questions or they shy away from asking altogether; when things come to a head, however, Apollo delivers: he lets the suffering and yet insolent autochthonous princess take refuge at his altar and allows his priestess to provide the evidence that will put an end to the meaningless strife for which he is to a great extent responsible.[71] It would be a great slight to this brilliant play to claim that Euripides wrote it only to counter stories of the pro-Spartan sympathies of the Delphic Oracle, but it is fair to say that a reminder of the old ties between Athens and Delphi as well as the prominence of the city in the sanctuary was high on his agenda. By entering into dialogue with Aeschylus, Euripides reformulated the problem of Apolline authority, shifting the focus from Apollo's justice to the god's truthfulness, and re-iterated the crucial role of Athena in preserving Apolline authority, be it in the god's fierce debate with the Erinyes in the Areopagus or in the chaotic situation in his own sanctuary caused by his secrecy and oblique pronouncements. Choosing the temple of Apollo as his setting Euripides brought to the foreground the monument that had been the most prominent and eloquent emblem of the close relations of Athens with Delphi for a century, thus anchoring the dramatic version of Athenian genealogy in tangible and visible reality. The Chorus' blindness

[70] For an assessment of the various solutions to the paradox of Euripides' at once positive and negative portrayal of Apollo see Conacher (1967) 275-85.

[71] For Apollo's protection of Creusa see Burnett (1971) 119-25

to the brilliant façade that had given Aeschylus the opportunity to highlight the ancient ties of Apollo with the sons of Hephaestus is an ironic Euripidean twist that draws attention to the distortions of reality that preoccupation with violence can cause.

The preoccupation of the Athenian contingent with violence even before the delivery of Apollo's oracle intimates that they come from an embattled environment which does not allow them to see the positive side. Unlike the grim picture of extreme violence based on mere suspicion that Thucydides paints, the message of the play is optimistic: human violence is under the divine control not only of Athena but of Apollo as well.[72] All one needs to do is shift perspective in order to see that the ties of their city with the Pythian Apollo are old, strong, and conspicuous. The sympathy with which all characters are drawn shows Euripides' compassion for and understanding of the violent reality of war and its ramifications for civic life and politics that make people see in the Pan-Hellenic sanctuary what they have seen and experienced home and abroad for some twenty years since the war broke out in 431.

I conclude by proposing, tentatively, an additional reason for a post-413 production date. According to Pausanias the Syracusans built their treasury in Delphi with the spoils from their victory over the Athenians (Συρακουσίων, τῶν μέν ἐστιν ὁθησαυρὸς ἀπὸ τοὺ Ἀττικοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου πταίσματος, 10. 11. 5). If the Syracusans put their plan into effect soon after the Athenian defeat, it is not hard to see the consternation caused by the news of the Syracusan commemoration of their victory in the Panhellenic sanctuary in a city that had commemorated its own victories with brilliant buildings in Delphi such as the Athenian treasury and the Stoa and where the memory of the disaster was still fresh.[73]

[72] On the basis of a different line of argumentation Wolff (1965) 177 has reached a similar conclusion: "In all the reaches of the play - among its individual actors, in the distantly apprehended world of politics, amidst the figures of the myths -there is violence and force. What is threatened in the human world, however, is never, in the course of the action realized, while the gods' violence proves beneficent"

[73] For the location of the treasury of the Syracusans see Partida (2000) 135-46, who dates its consecration to the late fifth century.

In such a context the prominence of the temple of Apollo in the Ion both per se and through the play's dialogue with the Eumenides would serve as a reminder that as far as prominence in Delphi was concerned Athens was unrivalled, because it was the only city that played a crucial role in the restoration and brilliant decoration of the most important building in the sanctuary, the temple of Apollo.

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Plate 1

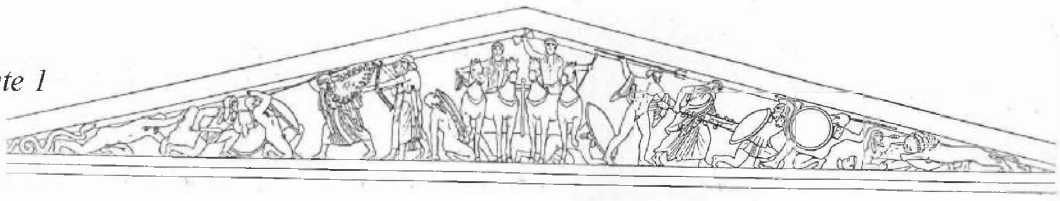

Plate 1 A

Plate 2

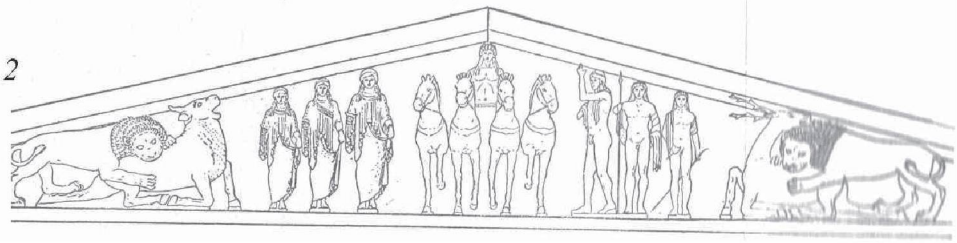

Plate 2 A